ALERT

News from the UFMCC
on AIDS Legislation, Education, Research and Treatment.

October 1994

World AIDS Day: A Call To Commitment

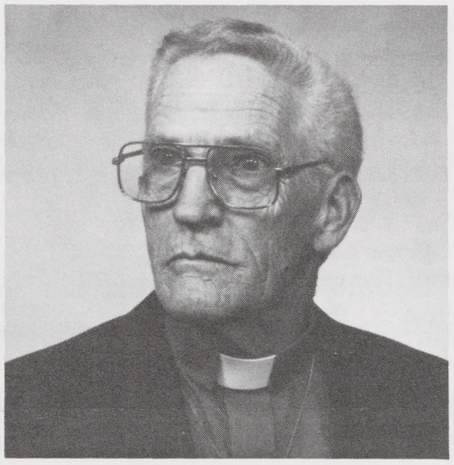
In observance of World AIDS Day, Thursday, December 1, 1994, the U.S. AIDS National Interfaith Network (ANIN) is calling upon all people of faith to "sign on" to *The Council Call*, a document which follows in its entirety.

A Commitment on HIV/AIDS by People of Faith, *The Council Call*, was written by the Council of National Religious AIDS Networks. The Council, a project of AIDS National Interfaith Network, is composed of leaders of AIDS networks associated with specific national religious bodies. Rev. Elder Don Eastman, Rev. Herbert Evans, and Rev. Steve Pieters represent UFMCC on this Council. It is a voluntary association working together to support ANIN's mission, to foster better communication and to enhance the dissemination of information from ANIN and/or other organizations to the individual members of the networks.

UFMCC AIDS Ministry encourages every individual, church, and organization to send their endorsement of this statement to the AIDS National Interfaith Network, 110 Maryland Ave., N.E., Suite 504, Washington, DC 20002.

(World AIDS Day, continued on page 2)

Profile of a Dedicated Deacon



Mr. Tad Lincoln

Mr. Tad Lincoln, as the Director of AIDS Ministry for Christ MCC in Miami, FL, has impacted the lives of countless numbers of people infected and affected by HIV in the South Florida area. He is a genuine hero to many people in Miami, in his service as a guide, comforter, and inspiration to many people living with HIV and AIDS.

His ministry to people with HIV/AIDS started in 1979, when Larry Klamfoth, the treasurer for both the church and the Southeast District of UFMCC, first got sick. "He got dementia right off the bat, and we didn't know what it was," Lincoln recalls. According to an article in the Christ MCC newsletter, "Klamfoth had many long stays in the hospital -- seven months in one stretch -- and Lincoln took him communion every Sunday. He died in 1982 of what was then cruelly called the 'gay plague.' Says Lincoln, 'I learned a lot about the dying process from Larry.' As the church suffered more cases of this disease, now called AIDS, he helped others through the final stages."

Tad credits an encounter with Rev. Steve Pieters at Samaritan Orientation in Orlando, FL with helping him to focus his ministry on HIV/AIDS. "It gave direction to my own ministry. I had to look at my own mortality, and work through certain issues...I started doing AIDS ministry on my own, started going to a lot of AIDS conferences, did a lot of reading, and began meeting more and more people infected with the virus."

(Profile, continued on page 3)

Ring Them Bells For World AIDS Day!

The AIDS National Interfaith Network is calling upon all houses of worship around the United States to ring their bells 14 times at 1:40 PM local time, on World AIDS Day, Thursday, December 1, 1994. This is in recognition of the 14 years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

For further information, contact ANIN at 110 Maryland Ave., NE, Suite 504, Washington, DC 20002; phone (202) 546-0807. ▼

Rev. Elder Perry to Sign *Council Call* At The United Nations

Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry, Founder and Moderator of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, has accepted an invitation to the United Nations for World AIDS Day, December 1, 1994. He and other heads of communion from many denominations will gather in the Dag Hammarskjold Room of the United Nations to sign the Council Call in a ceremony arranged by the AIDS National Interfaith Network.

The ceremony will follow a formal luncheon at the New York headquarters of the United Methodist Church. ▼

World AIDS Day: *(cont'd from page 1)*

A Commitment on HIV/AIDS By People of Faith: *The Council Call*

We are members of different faith communities called by God to affirm a life of hope and healing in the midst of HIV/AIDS. The enormity of the pandemic itself has compelled us to join forces despite our differences of belief. Our traditions call us to embody and proclaim hope, and to celebrate life and healing in the midst of suffering.

AIDS is an affliction of the whole human family, a condition in which we all participate. It is a scandal that many people suffer and grieve in secret. We seek hope amidst the moral and medical tragedies of this pandemic in order to pass on hope for generations to come.

We recognize the fact that there have been barriers among us based on religion, race, class, age, nationality, physical ability, gender and sexual orientation which have generated fear, persecution, and even violence. We call upon all sectors of our society, particularly our faith communities, to adopt as highest priority the confrontation of racism, classism, ageism, sexism, and homophobia.

As long as one member of the human family is afflicted, we all suffer. In that spirit, we declare our response to the AIDS pandemic:

1. We are called to love: God does not punish with sickness or disease but is present together with us as the source of our strength, courage and hope. The God of our understanding is, in fact, greater than AIDS.
2. We are called to compassionate care: We must assure that all who are affected by the pandemic [regardless of religion, race, class, age, nationality, physical ability, gender or sexual orientation] will have access to compassionate, non-judgmental care, respect, support and assistance.
3. We are called to witness and do justice: We are committed to transform public attitudes and policies, supporting the enforcement of all local and federal laws to protect the civil liberties of all persons with AIDS and other disabilities. We further commit to speak publicly about AIDS prevention and compassion for all people.
4. We promote prevention: Within the context of our respective faiths, we encourage accurate and comprehensive information for the public regarding HIV transmission and means of prevention. We vow to develop comprehensive AIDS prevention programs for our youth and adults.
5. We acknowledge that we are a global community: While the scourge of AIDS is devastating to the United States, it is much greater in magnitude in other parts of the world community. We recognize our responsibility to encourage AIDS education and prevention policies, especially in the global religious programs we support.
6. We deplore the sins of intolerance and bigotry: AIDS is not a 'gay' disease. It affects men, women, and children of all races. We reject the intolerance and bigotry that have caused many to deflect their energy, blame those infected, and become preoccupied with issues of sexuality, worthiness, class status, or chemical dependency.
7. We challenge our society: Because economic disparity and poverty are major contributing factors in the AIDS pandemic and barriers to prevention and treatment, we call upon all sectors of society to see ways of eliminating poverty in a commitment to a future of hope and security.
8. We are committed to action: We will seek ways, individually and within our faith communities, to respond to the needs around us.

Portions of the text of this document were taken, with permission, from "the African American Clergy's Declaration of War on HIV/AIDS," (The Balm in Gilead Inc., 1994), and from "The Atlanta Declaration," (AIDS National Interfaith Network, 1989)

UFMCC AIDS Ministry encourages every individual, church, and organization to send their endorsement of this statement to the AIDS National Interfaith Network, 110 Maryland Ave., N.E., Suite 504, Washington, DC 20002.

Christ MCC Raises Thousands For Cure AIDS Now

Christ MCC in Miami, Florida, recently raised more than $5,000 that will directly help people living with HIV/AIDS through the Cure AIDS Now/Meals on Wheels program of Miami. The fundraising dinner was part of a weekend of activities called "A Time to Dance." The weekend featured Rev. Steve Pieters, Field Director of UFMCC AIDS Ministry, who keynoted the fundraiser held at the Miami Airport Hilton. Rev. Mike Nikolaus, the pastor of Christ MCC, was the master of ceremonies for the event.

Nearly 300 people from all walks of life attended the dinner. Sponsors of the dinner, who purchased tables of 10, enabled 75 clients of Cure AIDS Now to attend the dinner/dance. Many community leaders, including judges, mayors, and police chiefs from the area were present for the event.

In addition to the banquet at the Miami Airport Hilton, the weekend featured a Saturday afternoon seminar on living with HIV/AIDS, led by Rev. Pieters, and a Sunday evening worship service with Rev. Pieters preaching a message of hope and healing.

Tad Lincoln, Director of AIDS Ministry for Christ MCC, reports, "All of the many comments on the 'A Time To Dance' Weekend were most favorable. We had 31 attending the Saturday afternoon seminar, including a number of first timers and four women. At Sunday night worship, we had 170 attending -- perhaps 20 more than usual, including a good many new folks attracted by Rev. Pieters, including two M.D.'s specializing in HIV treatment, who have continued to attend. Two new men came to the first support group after the event, and several more have phoned for information and will probably start attending. All in all, 'A Time To Dance' was the most successful and well-received event in our 24 year history at Christ MCC." ▼

The HIV "Spiritual Strength for Survival" Group of Christ MCC meets with Rev. Steve Pieters.

Profile of a Dedicated Deacon

(continued from page 1)

In early 1989, Lincoln was hired as the senior AIDS chaplain with Hospice, Inc., now called VITAS Health Care, Inc., where he worked for five years. He also became involved with Health Crisis Network, a large health care network which started in a living room with five MCC members. Now a sizeable group, Tad serves on their clergy advisory board.

Over two years ago, Lincoln started an HIV support group at Christ MCC, using the UFMCC resource, *The Spiritual Strength for Survival Support Group Manual.* The group has been running every week since. There are usually 8-12 people, and the group meets in Tad's luxurious South Miami home. "We're structured around the pamphlet to a point, but if they want to just be social one week, we do that. Sometimes we have a licensed clinical social worker come in and do a potluck, with questions and answers afterwards. This fall we will have a physician with us. Sometimes we show a video. Before starting in the group, each person is shown the videotape of Jane Pauley's profile of Rev. Pieters, to let them know what the group is all about." In August, the group hosted Rev. Pieters for an evening potluck and discussion at Tad's home. Pieters reports, "I have rarely seen such a vibrant and empowered group of persons living with HIV. Tad Lincoln has done an incredible job, motivating any number of people to do the work of healing and living full lives with HIV."

In addition to the support group, the church has a "Loaves and Fishes" program. Non-perishable foodstuffs and cash are collected by the MCC staff and distributed through Cure AIDS Now, as well as through MCC. This is also the way that the church's AIDS Ministry is funded, although Tad works full time on a voluntary basis.

Lincoln learned through the Clinical Pastoral Education program of Jackson Memorial Hospital, "not to have my own agenda at someone's hospital bed or home. I learned to listen very, very carefully, and to be able to respond at the level at which they're speaking."

Miami has a large Latino population, and Tad reports that since "most of them are brought up Roman Catholic, they're of the mindset that they're 'abominations.' We've got to work through that. With almost everyone, the challenge is to have them embrace life fully. If they still have bad behavior problems, like drug or alcohol dependencies, we work on changing that behavior so they can have a healthier life."

Tad tells the story of one fellow at the end stage of AIDS, whom he found lying drunk in bed. Tad got him up and to a twelve-step program, and he's now living a healthy sober life. "He was in the final stages of AIDS, but now he's getting better and better." Because of seeing results like this, Tad feels it's a "very rewarding ministry. At 67 years old, this gives me a reason to keep going."

When asked what keeps him from burning out, Lincoln replies, "After someone dies, I help the lover or family in the grieving process. Then after I've helped, I put them out of my consciousness. That's part of my coping mechanism. When things get really bad, I have a nice childish tantrum out in my backyard. Then I get down on my knees, and ask God for the strength to get up and get going again. It can be very discouraging, but the up side is to see people who are so despondent, fearful, and horrified, grow and blossom. They grow to see God and to love God."

As reported in the Christ MCC newsletter, "Despite the fact that he is HIV-negative, Tad Lincoln has a rare empathy that invites people's confidence. As he focuses on the Christ MCC community, he hopes to break down more barriers and bring the issue into the open."

Lincoln says, "I want to help people accept their place as persons with AIDS, and to have them understand it's not an automatic death sentence. To come out honestly about where they are in the disease process. Because our secrets are our biggest killers." ▼

Paris Global Summit on AIDS, December 1

[reprinted with permission from AIDS Treatment New, #206, Sept. 2, 1994]

The French government has invited heads of state of 42 countries to attend a Global Summit on AIDS, in Paris on December 1. Five working groups (on safety of the blood supply, vaccine and treatment research, care and social support, prevention of transmission, and protecting vulnerable populations) will hold preliminary meetings in September and October.

Mervyn Silverman, M.D., president of the American Foundation for AIDS Research (AmFAR), has said that "several results are clearly attainable, especially in guaranteeing the safety of the world's blood supply and significantly improving the effectiveness of prevention and care efforts in the developing world."

The U.S. has said that it will send Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala instead of President Clinton.

A background article by AIDS activist Eric Sawyer will be published in Spanish in *SIDAhora*, a newsletter of the PWA Coalition in New York; we could not confirm English publication by press time. For more information about the Summit, contact the Global AIDS Action Network (GAAN), 415/488-1453, or by fax at 415/488-1942. ▼

National Summit on HIV Prevention for Gay Men, Bisexuals, and Lesbians at Risk

[Reprinted with permission from INTERaction, the Newsletter of the U.S. AIDS National Interfaith Network.]

The AIDS National Interfaith Network was represented by Executive Director Ken South at a U.S. national summit meeting on HIV prevention for gay men, bisexuals, and lesbians at risk, sponsored by the American Association of Physicians for Human Rights in Dallas, Texas over the July 15th weekend.

One line from the invitation to the summit captured both the purpose and the urgency of the meeting: *"At current rates of seroconversion, a majority of HIV negative 20-year-old gay and bisexual men will eventually seroconvert."* These dramatic words were confirmed by various studies presented at the three day event. Participants included social scientists, AIDS activists, physicians, AIDS educators and community leaders from across the United States. Many of those present were veterans of the epidemic and many were also long term HIV-infected survivors.

There was agreement that current HIV prevention modalities are failing to reach large numbers of gay men and lesbians. HIV negative gay men are seroconverting for a large variety of reasons which are not related to knowledge of how AIDS is contracted. In spite of considerable knowledge about the disease, gay men, especially young gay men, are becoming infected at alarming rates in larger cities. Some of the reasons given by anthropologists include the difficulty young gay men may have in believing in a better future for themselves, or in seeing remaining HIV negative as a beneficial life value. For many others there is a pervasive sense of hopelessness accompanied by a negative self-image, reinforced by the internalization of homophobic messages from the world around them.

Whatever the reasons, the numbers of serconversions are alarming. Solutions to this epidemic within an epidemic will be difficult at best. They will require many more meetings like this one, and may require a radical change in how AIDS prevention is carried out in the future. ▼

Open Arms MCC Receives Grant

Open Arms MCC in Rochester, NY, recently received three grants totaling just over $2,300. These grants support Open Arms' Dorcas Fund - money used to assist individuals and families in temporary financial need.

Eastman Kodak Company's DOLLARS FOR DOERS granted the church $308, Rochester's HELPING PEOPLE WITH AIDS granted $1,200, and $800 was received from the Northeast District's AIDS Ministry Fund.

"The bulk of our assistance," according to Rev. Cathy Elliot, "is helping individuals and families impacted by HIV. We have helped buy a winter coat, sent children to summer camp, paid veterinary costs, provided prescription assistance as well as assisted with rent and utility bills. Our fund provides assistance for needs which fall between two other community assistance funds each with very specific and limiting criteria. We've purposely built flexibility into our fund to be as supportive as we can." ▼

Womansource HIV: Part 3: Focus on the Family

Burroughs Wellcome Co. is providing *Womansource HIV: Part 3: Focus on the Family*, a multimedia resource for HIV-positive women and their service providers. Enclosed in the kit are a 30-minute videotape and accompanying Leader's Guide. The unit presents the views and issues of HIV-positive women, their families, and providers in the delivery of women's services. The Leader's Guide contains a transcript of the video, supplementary resource materials and topics for individuals and group discussion. Participants include Carol Reese, Executive Director, and Judith Kelsey-Powell, Chaplain, from the AIDS Pastoral Care Network of Chicago. To order this resource and/or Part 1 (Psychosocial Issues - BW YO 5235) or Part 2 (Substance Abuse - BW YO 5658) call 800-722-9292. ▼